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# NT 510 The Gospel of Matthew

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**THIS IS A DRAFT. THE BOOKS ARE CORRECT. I HAVE INCLUDED THE FIRST ASSIGNMENT  
FOR THOSE WISHING TO WORK AHEAD.**

**ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY-Florida**

**The Gospel of Matthew**

**NT (IBS)510**

**Fall 2008**

**Instructor: Dr. Brian D. Russell\***

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**Office Hours: TBA. Always happy to make an appointment.**

*"Apply the whole of the text to yourself; apply the whole of yourself to the text." – Bengel*

**Welcome to your initial course in Inductive Bible Study at Asbury Theological Seminary. I sat in this exact class in Fall 1991. As I reflect upon my own life and ministry, I can say that this class was perhaps the most important one that I took at Asbury. I found the IBS method to be transformative and invigorating. It opened up the Scriptures for me in new and exciting ways. It is my prayer that you will use this class as an opportunity to grow in your interpretive skills.**

## **I. General Description**

A basic course in inductive Bible studies. The primary purpose is to enable the student to begin developing an inductive approach to Bible study, especially in the areas of observation and interpretation. Parts of the Gospel of Matthew are used to demonstrate and to practice a methodical approach which can be used in other biblical books. Some of the main themes of the Gospel are highlighted in the process. This course is also the prerequisite or co-requisite of the biblical language classes as well as the prerequisite for exegetical electives.

This course seeks to introduce the student to the "inductive method" of biblical study, and to direct this interpretive approach to the Gospel of Matthew.

This orientation implies several things, including (1) an emphasis upon methodology and methodological concerns, and (2) a strong commitment to direct, independent study of the biblical text, with secondary sources (e.g., commentaries, grammars, dictionaries of the Bible) to be consulted by the student only after extensive, firsthand study has been completed. The English Bible (RSV/NRSV) will serve as the basis for study, but students are encouraged to make use of the original whenever you are able (of course, I am aware that very few of you have taken Greek).

**THIS COURSE WILL REQUIRE A WEEKLY TIME COMMITMENT OF 7.5-9.0 HOURS OF OUT-OF-CLASS WORK. PLAN YOUR SCHEDULES ACCORDINGLY.**

Part of this course involves learning to work within time constraints. You could easily spend hundreds of hours on any of the assignments for this class, but in reality, for many of you, the time limits in this class will approximate the time available during "normal" weeks for sermon and teaching preparation.

Work diligently this semester to master the totality of this method and its application in the time available and you will have a rich resource to draw on for the rest of your ministry. Those whom you teach will be blessed!!!

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\* Significant portions of this syllabus reflect the influences of my IBS teachers at ATS (Profs. David Thompson and David Bauer) as well as their mentor in the method Robert A. Traina who taught IBS (then English Bible) at ATS from 1966-88. I am grateful and thankful for the role that the IBS department has played in my development as a person, teacher, and interpreter of Scripture.

## II. Course Objectives

- A. Methodology. The emphasis will be upon the observation and interpretation of chapters/segments and individual paragraphs and verses. By the end of the course, the student should be able to do the following:
1. As regards observation:
    - a. Survey books as wholes, including
      - (1) Identifying the general materials of the book (biographical, ideological, historical, etc.) and the specific materials, giving a brief title to each chapter whereby the contents of the chapter may be recalled by association;
      - (2) Locating the major units and sub-units in the book and identifying the main structural relationships operative between these units (MBS, pp. 49-55);
      - (3) Asking a few interpretive questions based upon each major structural law observed;
      - (4) Identifying the key verses and strategic areas which provide insight into the book as a whole;
      - (5) Locating data bearing on such higher critical questions as the author, place and date of writing, occasion for writing, recipients, etc.;
      - (6) Noting other major impressions relating to the book as a whole.
    - b. Survey of individual chapters/segments, including
      - (1) Giving a brief title to each paragraph (units) within the segment whereby its contents may be recalled by association;
      - (2) Locating the major groupings of paragraphs (units) within the segment and the main structural relationships operative between these units;
      - (3) Asking a few interpretive questions relating to each major structural relationship observed;
      - (4) Identifying the key verses or strategic areas which provide insight into the segment as a whole;
      - (5) Identifying the literary form(s) employed in the segment (MBS, pp. 68-71). [Some attention will also be given to the survey of divisions and sections.]
    - c. Observe the details of individual paragraphs and verses, including
      - (1) Noting, on the basis of Greek NT as well as the vernacular, the important and/or difficult terms, sentence structure, and the relations between sentences and groups of sentences (MBS, pp. 39-49);
      - (2) Asking detailed interpretive questions based on these observations.
  2. As regards interpretation:
    - a. Answer the most significant questions raised in the observation of paragraphs and verses, including:
      - (1) Identifying the most significant questions asked, based upon importance, difficulty, and interests;

- (2) Noting the types of evidence available for answering each interpretive question (MBS, pp. 105-66), and employing this evidence to answer each question selected.
    - b. Integrate the answers to the questions in a progressive fashion so as to synthesize first the paragraph, then the chapter/segment, and ultimately the book as a whole. This synthesis involves, inter alia, the answering of the questions raised during the surveys of segments and of books.
  3. As regards evaluation and application: Find the truths or principles which are transcultural, and relate them to appropriate contemporary situations.
  4. As regards correlation: Relate the theology of the book to the teaching of other biblical materials by the same author, to the New Testament as a whole (or, with Old Testament books, to the Old Testament as a whole), and finally to the Bible as a whole, thus moving toward a biblical theology.
- B. Content. The student should be able to do the following:
1. Think through the contents of the entire Gospel without reference to the printed text;
  2. Identify significant passages in the Gospel and interpret them contextually;
  3. Demonstrate the importance of a sound methodology for interpretation, including specific examples from the Gospel;
  4. Describe thoroughly the meaning and development of major themes in the Gospel, citing individual passages and other specific data to support conclusions;
  5. Discuss the historical and religious background of the First Gospel, demonstrating a general knowledge of critical problems regarding Matthew and an ability to use this historical and theological setting in the interpretation of the book.
- C. Attitude. The student should:
1. Appreciate the value of sound methodology for the interpretation of the biblical materials, resulting in a desire to apply the inductive method to other biblical books;
  2. Desire to make the Gospel of Matthew the object of intensive and creative study throughout life;
  3. Intend to employ seriously the Gospel of Matthew in preaching and teaching within the context of the church.

### III. Course Texts

- A. Modern Non-Paraphrase Version of the English Bible
- B. *Methodical Bible Study*, Robert Traina. Zondervan, 1982.
- C. *An Annotated Guide to Biblical Resources for Ministry*, David R. Bauer. Hendrickson, 2003.
- D. *Bible Study that Works*, David Thompson. Revised edition. Evangel Press, 1994.
- F. *Matthew as Story*. Jack Dean Kingsbury. 2<sup>nd</sup> Rev ed. Augsburg Fortress, 1988.

### IV. Course Requirements

- A. The completion of assigned lessons in writing, unless otherwise indicated by the instructor. All lessons are to be handed in at the end of the class period on the day designated. No late papers will be accepted save in cases in which permission is granted by the instructor based on

emergency. **If you are planning on typing your lessons, I encourage you to submit your work electronically via FirstClass. You will then receive typed feedback from me, and you will receive your paper as soon as I am finished grading it rather than having to wait for class.**

- B. Punctual attendance at all class sessions. Because of the importance of class attendance, a record of attendance will be taken at each class session. Absence at more than one class session will result in final grade penalty. Exceptions may be granted based on emergency, in consultation with the instructor. Please note that work-related absences are not emergencies.

## **V. Course Evaluation**

All written work will be evaluated. You will be given specific feedback for improving your performance. About 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the assignments will be assigned a letter grade based on a scoring rubric that I will provide you in advance. Thus, all work “counts”, but only part of the work is graded in a summative fashion.

The essential core of this class is your direct, individual study of assigned portions of the Psalter. To maximize your acquisition of the IBS methodology schedule your preparation time so that your assignments are done on-time.

Your assignments will consist *primarily* of your work, not the work of other commentators. Commentaries are to be consulted only after your own interpretive work has been completed and then clear documentation must be made of these sources. As you know, IBS is not about collecting the remarks of other sources. It is about gaining confidence through the application of a tested methodology to interpret the message of Scripture on your own. Believe me when I say that the IBS methodology will be one of the key assets that you acquire here at Asbury. It will serve you for the rest of your ministry.

Regular Assignments - 75%  
Final Assignment - 25%

**I take grading very seriously. It is my responsibility to evaluate your work and give you a letter grade. I hope to do this in the spirit of Ephesians 4:15-16 "But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love."**

### **Statement of Grades (from Catalog):**

Regarding the assignment of grades, let each one remember that the Seminary defines an "A" as "Exceptional work: outstanding or surpassing achievement of course objectives."

### **Incompletes (from Catalog)**

A grade of "incomplete" will be given only in the case of an "unforeseeable emergency." This does not include church work or problems in other courses at ATS.

- VI. Lessons – This schedule will be available the first day of class. For those wishing to get a head start. Here is Lesson 1. It will be due the second day of class.**

#### Lesson I. Methodology **DUE February**

1. Read *Bible Study that Works* and pp. 31-189 of *Methodical Bible Study*, keeping in mind the following suggestions:

- a. Acquaint yourself sufficiently with the material to use it for reference.
  - b. Do not be concerned with footnotes or exercises.
2. Write a 1-2 page summary of the books with questions that occurred to you in the course of reading. Simply keep a list of lessons and puzzles – what have I learned? What questions do I have? This assignment's goal is simply to orient you to the method as a whole.